COLLECTION OF PURITAN AND
ENGLISH THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

LIBRARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

SCC
9280

Bound by
SAVIDGE & KRIMMEL
232-34 N. 15th ST.
PHILADELPHIA 2, PA.

Solomon Stoddard

THE

DOCTRINE

OF

Inſtituted CHURCHES

Explained, and Proved from the WORD of GOD.

Solomon Stoddard A.M.
Northampton

CHAP. I.

The Word of God gives us ſufficient Light, to direct us in Inſtituted Churches and all Adminiſtrations therein.

THE Nature of an Inſtituted Church and the Ordinances to be attended therein, have been matter of great Inquiry in theſe latter Ages. And thoſe Inquiries have been Accompanied with great Animoſities, Diſcords and Perſecutions: Thoſe forms and methods that have been admired by ſome have been decryed by others, and Multitudes of People are left at a loſs whether there be any certain Rule to Guide us, or any certainty to be attained in theſe things.

Two things eſpecially have hindred theſe that have been Pious in theſe points, from giving ſatisfaction to others: One of them is that ſome of them have been exceeding tenacious of the Traditions and Ancient uſages of the Church, not conſidering how much Corruption and Degeneracy did in a little time prevail: whereby it comes to paſs that theſe things are obtruded upon us as Rules which were the Blemiſhes and Errors of the Ancient Church: We have a Veneration for antiquity and adopt the ſayings of Ancient

...mean. The other is, that some have atte... 12
...ect Platform, out of the Books of the New Testament
...on all Old Testament Rules, relating to Church Af-
... Date: but if we would have a right understanding
... of God in these things, must not be our dependence
...raditions, neither must we confine our selves to one part of
...ipture but search into the whole Word of God impartially.
It is certain that God does fully direct us in the Scripture, con-
...rning the Affairs of his House; as the Word of God doth perfect-
...direct us how we should behave our selves in the Family and in
...e Common-wealth, so in the Church: There is no need of any
...ddition to the Scriptures: There needs an interpretation of the
...ord, but nothing at all to be added to it: God doth not give us
...he broken pieces of a Platform, but hath revealed his whole
...ll in this matter. We are not left under a necessity of making
...e Rule or spelling at it. God hath described to us the
...hole Body of Divinity, All Scripture is a perfect Rule of
...fe, Psal. 19. 7. 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16. Scripture is Prayed for nothing
...the Day of Judgment, but what the Scripture does Condemn, Rev. 20. 12.
That God hath not revealed to us, is no Rule to us: And God hath no
...ore reserved the Rule but in the Scripture. As we have no extra-
...dinary Principles to reveal the mind of God, so there are no un-
...written traditions to make known the mind of God in this
...tter.

There be three sorts of Rules in Scripture to guide us in Church
...fairs.

1. *General Moral Rules*: These Rules give us light in many Church
...fairs: *So that Rule of Loving God and our Neighbour*, Mat. 22. 37,
...39. *So that Rule of not partaking in other Mens Sins*, 1 Tim. 5.
...22. *So that Rule of Peace and Edification*, Rom. 14. 19, 20. *So that*
...*Rule of doing things decently and in order*, 1 Cor. 14. 20. *So that Rule*,
...Phil. 4. 5. *So that Rule of Humility*, 1 Pet. 5. 5. *These Rules and*
...*such like are of as much use for us as our Duty in many Cases.* For,

2. There be many things necessary which there is no Institution
...about: God was more particular with the *Jews*, because the Church
...then was in its Infancy, than he is with us: So we have no institutio-
...n how many Elders to have in a Church, how often to Pray or
...Preach on the Sabbath: *How often to partake of the Lords Supper*, 1 Cor.
...11. 26. So there is no particular Institution for Moderators in
...Churches, in case of a vacancy of Elders: About Preaching without
...Mission. About the Limits and Bounds of particular Churches.
...There be abundance of other particulars, about Fasts, matters of
Discipline,

Diſcipline, the Age of Perſons to be admitted to the Lords Supper; which are to be determined by Moral Rules.

2. Many things that are commanded in Church Affairs are the proper conſequences of *Moral* Rules: And ſo don't need an inſtitution: There be many things occaſionally commanded: Which do not properly belong to Divine inſtitutions, that are not Branches of the ſecond Commandment, but proper deduction from *Moral* Rules; So that about Reconciliation to an offended Brother, *Matth.* 5. 23, 24. *For Chriſt did not now make new Jewiſh inſtitutions*: So that about private dealing with an offending Brother, *Matth.* 18. 15, 16. So thoſe Rules, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17, 19. 1 *Cor.* 11. 28. And many others are plain *Moral* Duties.

3. *Moral* Rules muſt be attended in Church Affairs as well as in other things: Rules for doing things that are for Peace, Edification, and for the good of our Neighbours, bind in Eccleſiaſtical caſes as well as in Civil and Domeſtical: Therefore they are Generally Propounded, *Phil.* 4. 8. *Yea, there is more weight to be laid on them, then on inſtitutions, Mar.* 12. 33. We muſt never Act contrary to *Moral* Rules; Churches are bound to *Moral* Rules, as well as other Societies: We have no liberty in the Adminiſtration of the things of Gods Houſe to break *Moral* Rules.

2. Old Teſtament inſtitutions: A great part of Old Teſtament inſtitutions are aboliſhed: All typical Laws are out of Date: But ſome inſtitutions that were in force then are in force now: Thus Church Societies, the Preaching of the Word, Faſts, Thankſgivings, are to be attended ſtill. Conſider,

1. They and we are under the ſame Goſpel, there was the ſame way of Salvation then as now, they were under a Covenant of Grace and Saved by Chriſt as well as we, *Heb.* 4. 2. Hence there be ſeveral things common to them and us: Hence the People of God under the Old and New Teſtament muſt be ſuch as have a viſible Union to Chriſt; they and we muſt have ſigns repreſenting Chriſt, 1 *Cor.* 10. 3, 4.

2. The Nature of a Church is the ſame under both Teſtaments: A Church is not one kind of thing in the Old Teſtament and another in the New: But it has the ſame eſſence and definition: The matter of the Church and the form is the ſame: The Church then ſtood in the ſame relation to God, was appointed for Communion with God, and enjoyed his preſence as now.

3. There were ſeveral Ordinances in the Jewiſh Church, that had no particular reference to the times before Chriſt; or to any particular condition of that People: And ſuch Ordinances ſeem to be of

force ſtill, as their having an holy Convocation, *Lev.* 23. 13. So, much of the work of the Prieſts, they were to teach the People, *Deut.* 33: 10. They were to bleſs the People, *Num.* 6. 23. So it was their manner in ſolemn Prayer and Bleſſing to lay on hands: So Excomunication, which is to continue in the Chriſtian Church, *Matth.* 18. 17.

4. We are referred in ſome caſes to thoſe inſtitutions: God ſends us to the Law for light, directs us to do as was appointed in the Old Teſtament: So about Womens not ſpeaking in the Church, 1 *Cor.* 14. 34. So about the maintenance of Miniſters, *Gal.* 6. 6. 1 *Cor.* 9. 13, 14.

3. New Teſtament inſtitutions, there were ſome inſtitutions appointed by Chriſt under the Goſpel, theſe are few; principally, what Officers ſhall be in the Church, *The Sacraments of Baptiſm, and the Lords Supper, and the firſt day Sabbath.*

1. We muſt diſtinguiſh between Temporal and Perpetual inſtitutions: Some inſtitutions were only for a time, as the Office of the Apoſtles. *So the anointing of the ſick with Oyl, Jam.* 5.14. There are others that are to continue to the end of the World: *So is Baptiſm,* Matth. 20. *The Lords Supper,* 1 Cor. 11. 26. Theſe Ordinances will not be removed as *Jewiſh* Ceremonies, *Heb.* 13. 28.

2. Diſtinguiſh between approved practiſes and inſtitutions, there were many practiſes and inſtitutions, there were many practiſes in the primitive times that were approved, yet not binding to us: The Church at *Jeruſalem* had ſeven Deacons, *Acts* 6. 5. *They did Baptize in private Houſes,* Act. 10. 33. *Chriſt ſent out his Diſciples two and two,* Luk. 10. 1. This doth not ſhew that theſe things were inſtitutions; that is meet to be done in one caſe, that is not meet to be done in another: One or two Examples ſhew the Lawfulneſs of a practiſe, but do not make it a binding Rule.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Nature of Instituted Churches Explained.

THE Word *Church* is used Equivocally, there are three senses especially, wherein it is used in the Scripture.

First, It is taken for those that are Spiritually United unto Christ, the mistical Body of Christ, *Eph.* 5. 27. *That he might present it to himself a Glorious Church.*

Secondly, For that part of the World that doth profess the true faith for them that are visible Christians, 1 *Cor.* 15. 9. *I persecuted the Church of God.*

Thirdly, It is taken for an Instituted Church; this Church is invested by Christ with Spiritual Power and is thus defined: A Church is a Society of Saints joyned together, according to the appointment of Christ for the constant carrying on of his publick Worship: A Church is a Society, a single Person is not a Church, a Church is a Collection or Congregative Body, consisting of many Members, 1 *Cor.* 12. 27. Ye are the Body of Christ and Members in particulars, hence it is compared to a flock and other Collective Bodies: It is a Society of Saints, *The Members of a Church are Saints by calling*, 1 Cor. 11. 12. To the Church of God which is at *Corinth* to them, which are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints 1 *Cor.* 14. 33. *In all the Churches of the Saints, the Church of the Jews was a Society of Saints*, Psal. 79. 12, 11. Psal. 1. *None are to be Members of Instituted Churches, but those that are Members of the Catholick Church.* Particular Churches are but parts and branches of the Catholick Church, they are the Churches of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of God, therefore must be Holy. *Therefore Societies of Papists are abusively called Churches*: A Church doth joyn together for the Publick carrying on of the Worship of God: A Family joyning together for the private carrying on of the Worship of God is not a Church; we read of a Church in the House of *Aquila*, *Rom.* 16. 5. And in the House of *Nymphas*, *Col.* 4. 15. Because there the publick Worship of God was attended: The Church doth joyn for the carrying on of publick Worship; as the Preaching of the word, the Administration of Sacraments and dispensing of Censures in a publick way.

A Church doth joyn together for the conſtant carrying on of the publick Worſhip of God, for a Church is a Body Corporate, which may continue from Generation to Generation, it is not any occaſional Meeting together, that gives being to a Church: A Church is a ſtanding Society, not depending on any occaſional Meeting; Therefore a Congregation that meet together on a Lecture Day, from ſeveral Towns to hear the Word Preached are not a Church, neither have any Eccleſiaſtical Power: Yea, a ſynod that meet now and then occaſionally, though it may be called a repreſentative Church, is not a Church properly; the Members thereof are choſen for a particular occaſion: A Church doth joyn together according to Chriſts appointment; Chriſt has given a Rule according to which they ought to joyn together, and if Men joyn in Worſhiping with a Church irregularly, that does not make them to be Members of that Church: If a man that lives in one Town where there is a Church, doth joyn conſtantly in worſhiping with another Church, that doth not make him a Member of that Church.

Queſt. *Who are viſible Saints?*

Anſw. This Queſtion hath been matter of great debate, and an occaſion of great contention in the Church; we may not count thoſe only to be Saints, who after the ſtricteſt Examination, give conſiderable evidence that they are Saints: We have no ſuch Rule, the practice of the Apoſtles in admitting Members into the Chriſtian Church, doth not Countenance any ſuch Opinion, neither are we to make Baptized Perſons and Viſible Saints to be the ſame; for Perſons muſt be Viſible Saints before they are Baptized; and ſome that are Baptized, may ceaſe to be Viſible Saints; neither are they only Viſible Saints, that make a profeſſion of the true Religion joyned with an Holy Converſation: Some Men may behave themſelves ſo as to deſerve a ſentence of Excommunication, and yet be Viſible Saints: Viſible Saintſhip and real Saintſhip, may conſiſt with a great deal of iniquity in the Converſation for a time.

Viſible Saints are ſuch as make a ſerious profeſſion of the true Religion, together with thoſe that do deſcend from them, till rejected of God.

1. Such as do make a ſerious profeſſion of the true Religion, are Viſible Saints; we find the Apoſtles did really accept of ſuch, not waiting to ſee, what their Converſation would be, *Act.* 16, 14, 15. ſo did *John*, Luk. 7. 29, 30. *Such are to be accepted without delay.*

2. Their Infant Seed are likewiſe Viſible Saints, God gives that Teſtimony for them, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14.

1. Such

3. Such alſo as deſcend from them, from Generation to Generation, untill they are rejected by God are Viſible Saints; for they that are Viſible Saints don't ceaſe to be ſo, till God hath caſt them off; So it was with the Poſterity of *Abraham*, if they ſhould carry it wickedly, or if they ſhould fall into Hereſy, yet they are Viſible Saints till God hath rejected them; and there are two ways whereby God may ſhew his rejection of them: One is when they do depart from the Churches of God to Heathen or Antichriſtian Societies, the other is, when the People that they belong unto and they with them are unchurched by God.

CHAP. III.

Of the Nature of a Congregational Church.

AS a Civil Society doth conſiſt of one Town, or more Towns, ſo an inſtituted Church is either Congregational, or that which conſiſts of Divers Congregations.

A Congregational Church is a Church that is bound by the appointment of God to aſſemble together in one place, in a conſtant way for the Celebration of his Publick Worſhip: A Congregational Church, is a Church conſiſting of one Congregation: Such we read of, *Act.* 20. 7. 1 *Cor.* 14. 23. The form of a Congregational Church is, that they are bound by the appointment of God to aſſemble in one place in a conſtant way for the Celebration of his Publick Worſhip. Some have thought that the form of a Congregational Church is a Church Covenant, explicite or implicite, wherein they bind themſelves to walk together according to the order of the Goſpel: It is thought that the Children of *Iſrael* Covenanting with God is a Foundation for this, whereas that Covenant of theirs is no other, then what all Chriſtians do make, when they make a profeſſion of Faith and Obedience; we never read of any particular Covenant made in the Synagogues, which Anſwer to our Congregations, whereby the Members of one Synagogue were bound one to another: It is pleaded that nothing elſe can bind a free People one to another but an Eccleſiaſtical Covenant; but there is ſomewhat elſe that binds a free People in the ſame Town to mutual ſubjection, to the Government of the Town, and tho Chriſtians are a free People, yet they have not a Licentious Liberty but are bound

by God, and likewise by their own profession to the Rule of the Gospel: Neither is there any necessity of such a bond to distinguish one Church from another, and to avoid confusion of Churches, we read of no such particular Covenant in the New Testament, we have no precept for it, we have no president for it; we read of many Congregational Churches, but there is no Syllable in the Word of God, intimating any such thing, neither is there any need of it.

The Members of a Congregation are bound to carry on the Worship together, this is Gods appointment, that his People that live together should carry on his Worship together, the Christians at *Corinth* are the Church of *Corinth*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. And the Christians at *Ephesus* are the Church of *Ephesus*; Order calls for it, that where Men live, there they joyn together to carry on the Work of Christ. If a Christian live in a Town, where there is a Church, he is immediately bound to joyn with that Church; and that Church is bound to him to govern him, and give him Christian Priviledges; there be some cases wherein there is need of humane prudence in determining how many Churches shall be in some Towns: Some Towns arise to be numerous, so that it is fit they should be joyned in several Societies: And some are so small and lye so near together, that it is fit that two or more should make one Church, in such cases God has appointed that the bounds of Churches be set either by General agreement, or by order from Authority, but there is no occasion that every Member should Covenant particularly with the Church: Grant this particular Covenant to be the form of a Church, and then a Christian may continue a considerable time, without any relation to a particular Church, tho he lives where there is a Church: And then a Man may be a Member of the Church of *Corinth* for seven years together, and live all that while in Communion with the Church at *Jerusalem*; a Covenant which he lives in the continual breach of, makes a Member at *Corinth*, and according to some, gives him a right to all Ordinances: Grant this particular Covenant and we shall be to seek, what Church many Children do belong to, the father is in Covenant with one Church, the Mother with another, the Child was Baptized in a third and lives in a fourth: This Doctrine of the particular Covenant which is wholly unscriptural, is the reason that many among us are shut out of the Church, to whom Church Priviledges do belong.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Priviledges of Congregational Churches.

THE great Priviledge of Congregational Churches is to choose their own Officers, they have a liberty given to them by God to choose suteable Persons to Office, they are limited to Persons fitly qualified, but the Priviledge of choosing them doth belong unto the Church, it is very probable, that the Synagogues of the Jews had liberty to chuse their own Ministers; if they were confined to the Tribe of *Levi*, yet out of the Levites they choose for themselves; However, thus it ought to be in Christian Churches, the Apostles ordered the Church of *Jerusalem* to choose their own Deacons, *Act.* 6. 3, 4. They did not take upon them to prescribe, who the Persons should be, and impose Deacons on them, but referred the matter to their own choice; and the People nominated two, out of which God chose one to be an Apostle, *Act.* 1. 23.

Besides, It is the Priviledge of all free Societies to choose their own Officers; such Countrys as are conquer'd don't chuse their own Rulers, nor such Countrys where the Government is Hereditary, but such as are free, neither under the Power of Conquerors, nor the Bond of a Covenant do choose their own Officers either mediately or immediately: All the Power that Men have over a free People is by their own consent, directly or indirectly, excepting such cases wherein God is pleased to appoint Rulers, or some who shall appoint Rulers over them; God appointed *Aaron* and his Posterity to the Office of the Priesthood in *Israel*, but God hath not appointed any Officers in Churches now, neither hath he appointed any that shall impose Officers over them, but hath left them to their free choice.

Yea, where a Church hath teaching, or Ruling Elders, or both, there is no necessity that they should consent to the choice, if they do not consent, yet if there be the consent of the Major part, the choice is vallid; the Officers ought to submit thereto, unless they have some weighty Objection. the Act of the Major part, is the Act of the Community, that which is the Priviledge of the Community, must

...and the Power of ...Church Act.

And as the Church hath Power to choose their own Officers, so in case of need they have Power to choose those that shall supply the want of Officers for a time, the Church is entrusted with sufficient Power in order to the carrying on of Gods work: Therefore in case of the vacancy of a Pastor, they may choose one to Preach to them for a time, in case they have no Elders, they may choose a Moderator; In case they have no Deacons they may choose one to do the Deacons work, yea in case there be need, they may choose some other Minister of the Gospel, to Administer the Seals of the Covenant, or perform some Act of Government upon a particular occasion.

By the same reason that a Church may choose its own Officers, it may also choose its own Servants; *Phebe* is called a Servant of the Church, *Rom.* 6: 2. So were Widdows, for they were not ordained; So their Sexton and such as shall over-see the Buildings, or any other Servants that may be for the conveniency of the Church. This Church Priviledge of choosing Officers, doth only belong to the Brethren of the Church, the Brethren are said to choose the Deacons, *Act.* 6. 3. *And Women have not Power in this matter*, 1 Cor. 14. 33. *Let your Women keep silence in the Churches*, 1 Tim. 2. 12. Suffer not a Woman to teach, nor to usurp Authority over the Man, it is inconsistent with that State of subjection which God hath put them into, if they might vote, they might over-rule the Men, and by the same Rule, those Males that are not their own Masters, (as Children that are not at their own dispose, and Servants) have nothing to do to vote in the Church they that are not free, are not to partake of this Liberty.

CHAP. V.

Of the Officers of Congregational Churches and their Power.

THE Officers of Congregational Churches are either Elders or Deacons, the Elders are either teaching Elders, or Ruling Elders. The work of the Teaching Elders lies principally in these five

five things; they are to be the mouth of the People to God, both in the publick Aſſembly, and privately in caſe of ſickneſs, they are to Preach the Word of God, they are to Adminiſter the Seals of the Covenant, they together with the Ruling Elders, are to Govern the Church, and they are to bleſs the People.

Such Learned Men as are ſuteably qualified, but not in Office may upon occaſion diſcharge ſome part of this work; but there are ſome other parts of it, that they may not meddle with, thoſe Acts which are Acts of Natural Worſhip may be performed by them, as praying and Preaching; but ſuch Miniſterial Acts as do depend wholly upon inſtitution, they may not perform, as the Adminiſtration of Sacraments, the diſpencing of Cenſures and an Authoritative bleſſing; theſe are performed only by Virtue of an Inſtitution, therefore are to be done only according to an Inſtitution.

A teaching Elder by Virtue of his relation to a particular Church, is bound to attend his work in that Church: And by Virtue of that relation, he has no Authority to perform Acts of Office to any other Church, or to the Members of any other Church Aſſembling with his own Church: Paſtoral Power over a particular Church gives him no Power over any that are of that Church, his relation to them gives him no Power over any other.

But every Man that is a Paſtor of a particular Church ſtands in a more General relation, as a Miniſter of *Chriſt*; ſome that are not Paſtors to particular Congregations are yet Miniſters of Chriſt; and every Man that is a Paſtor to a particular Church is a Miniſter of Chriſt, and by Virtue of that Relation he may do Acts of Office to the Members of other Churches occaſionally aſſembling with his own, and towards other Churches being deſired, when he can conveniently be ſpared from his own, and towards particular Perſons that are Members of no Church.

The Levites were the Miniſters of God before they had Relation to any particular Synagogue; *Paul* hath Office Power over the Brethren as well as the Church of God, *Act.* 26. 17, 18. The Church at *Jeruſalem* ſent *Barnabas* to *Antioch*, to officiate as a Miniſter, *Act.* 11. And they that have Authority to Preach have alſo to Baptize, *Mat.* 28. 19, 20. We find that *Paul* did not Baptize ſuch as he brought over to the Chriſtian faith, but committed that work to ſome other inferiour Miniſters that were in Company with him, 1 *Cor.* 1. 14. And this he did after the Example of Chriſt, *John* 4. 2. There is need that ſome have Office-Power now to Preach to the Heathens, as well as there was in the Days of the Apoſtles, and

there may be several now that Baptism doth belong to; as well as *Cornelius*, the Eunuch and the Jailor and others, therefore there are some appointed by God for that Service.

The Teaching Officer is appointed by Christ to Baptize and Administer the Lords Supper, and therefore he is made the Judge by God, what Persons those ordinances are to be Administred to, and it is not the work either of the Brethren or Ruling Elders, any ways to intermeddle in that Affair or Limit him; we never read that the Apostles did advise with the Church, whether they should Baptize such as offered themselves. As the Administration of these ordinances is committed to them, so the judging concerning those who they are to be Administred unto, as they are to Judge what subject to teach upon, and as the Deacon is to Judge who is to be relieved; So the Minister is to Judge who is to be Baptized and Admitted to the Lords Supper. The Ruling Elders are to joyn with the Teaching Elders in Rule and Government; these Officers are called Governments, 1 *Cor.* 12. Such as Rule, *Rom.* 12. Distinguished from such as Labour in the Word and Doctrine, 1 *Tim.* 5. The Teaching Elders with the Ruling Elders, make the Presbytery of the Church; with whom the Government of the Church is entrusted: The Power of Censuring offenders in the Church, and absolving of Penitents, doth belong alone to these, the Brethren of the Church are not to intermeddle with it. The Elders are to Rule over the Church, and therefore not to be over-ruled by the Brethren, it is the work of the Elders to rule well, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. The Members of the Church are to be obedient to the Elders, therefore not to controul them in their Government, *Heb.* 12. 17. The Elders of the *Jewish* Church, had the Power of Government of the Church in their hands, hence we read of the Rulers and Chief Rulers of the Synagogues, *Act.* 18. *Deut.* 21. 5. The Elders have the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven committed to them, *Matth.* 16. 18. The meaning is, that he should be an Elder and Ruler of the Church, it is spoken of as a Personal reward of his profession.

Obj. *Matth.* 18. 17. *Tell it to the Church, this implies the Power of the Brethren.*

Answ. 1. By the Church is meant the Ecclesiastical Authority in distinction from the Civil.

2. It is not harsh by the Church to intend the Elders of the Church. See, *Numb.* 24. 25.

3. By the Church must be meant the Elders of the Church; for this was a Rule in the Day when it was spoken, and there was

now

now no Church in Being, but the *Jewish* Church; in which all the Power of Government was with the Elders.

Obj. 1 *Cor.* 5. 1, 4. *The Church was ordered to cast out the Incestuous Person, and* 2 Cor. 12. *His Punishment is said to be inflicted by many.*

Answ. 1. They may be only required to publish a sentence of Excommunication from *Paul.*

2. It is common in Scripture, to attribute that which is done by the Ruler to the Publick Society; as when God requires that the People of *Judah* do Acts of Publick Justice, he doth not intend that the People should intrude into that work, but that the Ruler do it.

3. Whereas it is said that the Punishment was inflicted by many, it may be read before many; Deacons were chosen at first to have an over-sight of the Poor, *Act.* 6. And there is nothing plainly declared to be their work besides that. It is intimated, *Rom.* 12. 8. That it is their work to shew mercy and to give; it is Generally put upon them to take care about the Ministers dues, and about the Provision for the Lords Table, which is gathered from that phrase, *Act.* 6. 2. It is not meet that we should leave the Word of God and serve Tables, but there seems to be no necessity, that there must be a Church Officer to do; all that work which the Church is to see done; some things may be done by Servants.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Ordination of Church Officers.

THere are none to be ordained Officers in the Church of God, but those that have a regular call to those Offices; Ordination is the Admission of Persons into their Office, or the consummation of their call, needful to the regular Execution of their Office; it includes in it first, a solemn imploring of the presence of God with them in their Office.

Two things are requisite unto a call; One is, the approbation or invitation of those whom God hath entrusted with that care; the other is, the consent of the Person invited; the former may be a call to the latter, and bind the Person to accept, but there must be both

both, before he is called of God to enter immediately upon the work of the Office; before he be accepted of God as an Officer.

The work of the Deacon being confined to one Congregation, the invitation of that Church, is sufficient without any further approbation, *Act.* 6. 7.

God having appointed all his Holy Ordinances to be Administred in a particular Church; in case of necessity, the choice of a Church is sufficient (without any further approbation) unto the calling of Elders, as when *Luther* and others broke off from Popery.

Yet Elders having not only Power over their particular Churches, but also over others, and God having committed to National and Provincial Churches, the care of particular Congregations, it is requisit, when it may be obtained, that there be an approbation of Men chosen to be Elders, by some deputed by the National or Provincial Church.

Furthermore, some Persons being to be entrusted with the Office of being Ministers of Christ, who have no call to any particular Congregation, there is need that they have the approbation of some deputed by the Church in that Country, or at least by a particular Congregation: The Persons that are to perform this Act of Ordination, ought to be such as are most suitable to the Ends of Ordination, *viz.* The signifying approbation and the obtaining the presence of God with him; sometimes we find that extraordinary Persons have ordained a Person to extraordinary Office, 2 *Tim.* 1. 6. Sometimes we find that extraordinary Persons have ordained ordinary Officers, *Act.* 14. 23. And there is command given to extraordinary Officers to ordain ordinary, 1 *Tim.* 5. 22. 1 *Tit.* 5. Sometimes we find that extraordinary Officers, and ordinary have joyned in the ordaining of extraordinary; *Act.* 13. 1, 5. Sometimes we find that ordinary Officers, have ordained an extraordinary Officer; 1 *Tim.* 4. 14. In a Provincial Church that is in order, Ministers ought to be ordained by such Elders, as are appointed by the Publick Ecclesiastical Authority of the Land.

In such Countrys where the Church is not in order, it is meet that the Ministers be ordained by some suiteable Persons deputed by the Neighbouring Elders, but in case of necessity, Ministers may be ordained by some of the Brethren appointed by the Church to that service.

The Ordination of Deacons ought to be performed by Elders of the same Church, in case there be any, or by the Brethren in case there be none.

A.

A Minister removing from one Church to another, may be ordained a second time, as *Paul* was, and probably *Timothy*.

It is the manner in some places to give to Churches at their Constitution, and to Ministers at their Ordination, the right hand of fellowship, from the Example of the Apostles; but it may be doubted whether that was any more then a civil Act, if it be an Institution, we are to seek whether it be to be done to all those Persons, that we have fellowship with, and when it ought to be performed.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Worship that is to be attended in Congregational Churches.

THE End of this Constitution of Congregational Churches is the joynt Celebration of the Worship of God, herein they differ from civil Societies, that meet together for the management of civil affairs.

The first part of Worship that is to be attended in the Church of God is Prayer; Prayer which includes in it, besides Petitions, confessions and thanksgivings, is a principal part of Gods Worship, Prayer is a part of Gods Worship, *Psal* 107. 32. *Psal.* 149. 1. This is to be attended in the Church, *Act.* 1. 14. *Act.* 4. 24. *Act.* 6. 4. These publick Prayers are to be ordinarily performed by the Teaching Elders; in case there be a Vacancy it may be performed by the Ruling Elders, or some of the Brethren, but ordinarily the Minister is to be the mouth of the People to God, *Act.* 6. 4.

These publick Prayers ought not to be made by the reading of prescribed forms of Prayer, out of a Book, he that hath not the gift of Prayer, is not fit to be a Minister; there may be some exempt Cases wherein it is Lawful for a Man to Pray in a form which they have Learned out of a Book, but the imposing of such a thing on Men is an addition to Divine Institutions, and the ordinary practising of it is of very bad Consequence; it quenches and stifles the Spirit of Prayer, indulges Men in Idleness and is very unprofitable to others.

The second part of Worship to be performed in the Church, is Singing of Psalms; this is a Moral Duty not belonging peculiarly to the time of the Old Testament, as Christ with his Disciples did practise it; So afterwards *Paul* and *Silas*, *Act.* 16. And we have positive commands for it, *Eph.* 5. 19. *Col.* 3. 16. *Jam.* 5. 13. In the primitive times when God gave to all extraordinary Gifts of his Spirit.

It was the manner sometimes for one Man to sing a *Psalm*, and the Congregation to say *Amen*, 1 *Cor.* 14. 15, 16. But now it is most proper for us to joyn together in Singing of *Psalms*, as Christ and his Disciples did, and as *Moses* and the Children of *Israel* did, *Exod.* 15. 1.

As the Church of *Israel* were wont to Sing the *Psalms* of *David*, so (tho we are not forbidden to Sing *Psalms* of a private composure) it is Lawful for us to Sing the *Psalms* of *David* and other Scripture *Psalms*, the Apostle when he directs us to Sing *Psalms*, *Hymns* and Spiritual Songs, *Eph. Col.* 3. Hath a manifest respect to the division of *Davids Psalms*, some things in those *Psalms* are not so suteable to our present Case, so it is in what we read, yet those *Psalms* are very suteable for us to meditate upon; and contain in them much Instruction and Incouragement, and because they were indicted by the Spirit of God, are more proper to affect our hearts and excite the workings of Grace, then such as are of a private Composure.

A third part of Worship is the Preaching and Teaching of the Word; the Preaching of the Word is to be attended to the End of the World, *Matth.* 28. 19. 20. It is the Duty of Ministers to Preach the Word, 2 *Tim.* 4. 2. A Minister is called a Preacher, *Rom.* 10. 14. This is a special means to advance the Conversion of Sinners and Edification of Saints.

Altho it be the special Office and Duty of Teaching Elders, and ordained Ministers of the Gospel, yet Preaching being a Moral Duty, it is lawful for those, who are not ordained Ministers, to Preach the Gospel; Yea, in some cases it is Lawful for such Men who are not devoted to the Ministry, provided they have suteable abilities.

The reading of large Portions of Scripture upon the Sabbath Day, which was constantly Practised by the *Jewish* Church, is not so particularly now required by God, there was great need of it in those Ages, when the World had not the benefit of Preaching, but there is no institution requiring any such service

vice of us, any further then the Rule of Edification calls for. [illegible]

Miniſters are not bound to obſerve any particular method in their Preaching, they may Preach either by expounding ſome Portion of Scripture, or by raiſing a Doctrine from a particular Text, and applying of it, or by explaining of a Catechiſm, or in any other profitable way. Miniſters have Power to Catechiſe their Hearers, not only that they may know their fitneſs to participate at the Lords Table, but alſo in order to their growth in knowledge, tho it may be preſumed that many Perſons are inquiſitive and induſtrious, yet there are many others who are not to be confided in, and the Miniſter hath Power by Virtue of his Paſtoral charge, to ſee that they Learn; reaſon dictates this to be a moſt ſuteable method, as in the Learning of Arts and Languages, ſo in the Learning of the way of ſalvation, the moſt proper and profitable ways of teaching, are to be uſed by Miniſters.

A fourth part of Worſhip is Baptiſm; this is an ordinance appointed by Chriſt himſelf to be a perpetual Ordinance in the Chriſtian Church, It was publiſhed by *John* before, by Virtue of an Inſtitution, but afterwards declared by Chriſt, to be a ſtanding ordinance in the Church.

It is very likely that the form afterwards uſed by *John* and his Diſciples was, that they did Baptize in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, *Act.* 19. 5. But ſeeing Chriſt did expreſly command his Apoſtles before his aſſention, to *Baptize in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt*, we have no reaſon to think that the firſt Teachers of the Goſpel did uſe any other form, and when we read that the *Samaritans, were Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, *Act.* 8. 18. And that *Peter* ordered that *Cornelius* and his Company ſhould be Baptized in the Name of the Lord, *Act.* 10. 48. No more ſeems to be intended by it, then their being Baptized according to the inſtitution of the Lord Jeſus.

The Perſons that are ſent to Adminiſter Baptiſm, are the ſame that are ſent to Preach the Word, *Matth.* 28. 19, 20. Tho the Apoſtles did ſometimes decline it, yet we have reaſon to conclude that they committed it to Inferiour Miniſters. After the Exemple of Chriſt, who did not commit it to the People, but to his Diſciples, *John* 4. 2. Therefore ſuch Preachers as are not ordained Miniſters, are not to Baptize.

Baptiſm

Baptism may be Administred either in the Publick Assembly or in private, there is no appointment that necessitates the publick performance of it, there is nothing in the Nature of the ordinance that doth necessitate it; and we find that the Apostles and Apostolical Men, did it as there was occasion, both publickly and privately, *Act.* 8. 38 and 9. 18. and 16. 33.

There is no necessity that Persons be Members of any particular Congregation before they be Baptized; Persons before they be Members of any particular Congregation, may have that qualification that gives them a right to Baptism, *viz.* Visible Saintship; many that were Baptized in the first times did not belong to any particular Congregation of Christians, and tho many of them did belong to particular *Jewish* Congregations or Synagogues, yet some did not, *Act.* 16. 33.

Such adult Persons as make such a profession of the Christian Faith, as is Morally sincere, are to be Baptized; as doth appear by the Example of *John*, Christ himself, *Philip* and others, who were directed by the Spirit of God; and none were refused that did seriously tender themselves to be Baptized.

Such Infants as are descended from the Covenant People of God by either Parent, are to be Baptized, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. Such Infants as do descend from Parents that are under Church censures, for immoralities, are not to be denied Baptism, because Excommunication doth not cut *Men* off from the Covenant of God; such Infants as are the Children of Heathens, belonging to the Families of the People of God, are Incorporated into the Covenant and are to be Baptized; when the Apostle saith, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. Else were your Children unclean, he speaks of them as they come into the World; yet it follows not, but when they are taken into the Families of Christians, they do become Holy; such were to be Circumcised under the Law.

A fifth part of Worship is the Lords Supper; which was instituted by Christ a little before his Death, to be a standing Ordinance in the Christian Church; all such Professors of the Christian Faith, as are of blameless Conversation, and have knowledge to examine themselves and discern the Lords Body, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper.

Three things are requisite in order to admission to the Lords Supper; First, Visible Saintship, and that is found in such Persons; all professors walking blamelessly are Visible Saints; the *Members* of the *Jewish* Church are often called Saints in the Scripture, who did

give

give no further evidence of their Saintſhip, a Profeſſion of the faith joyned with a good Converſation, is a ſufficient ground for Charity, theſe are marks that we are directed in the Scripture to Judge of *Mens* Saintſhip by; The Apoſtle did accept of ſuch Perſons for Viſible Saints, *Men* that have theſe Characters, are not viſibly wicked, therefore they are Viſible Saints; theſe properties are the proper Fruits of Saintſhip, and therefore conſtitute *Men* Viſible Saints; ſuch a profeſſion as being ſincere makes a *Man* a real Saint, being *Morally* ſincere, makes a *Man* a Viſible Saint. That whereby Godly *Men* do make their Saintſhip Viſible, does make *Men* Viſible Saints, *viz.* A profeſſion of the truth and a good Converſation.

A ſecond requiſite is, that they be not ſcandalous; a *Man* that is really and viſibly Godly may fall into a ſcandal, and upon that account be forbidden to participate at the Lords Table, but when their Converſation is good, they cannot be hindred upon that Account.

A third requiſite is, that they have knowledge to examine themſelves and diſcern the Lords Body; for the want of this Infants are denied the Lords Supper.

Thoſe Adult Perſons that are fit to be admitted into the Church, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper.

All Adult Perſons that are fit to be admitted into the Church, ordinarily have all thoſe qualifications requiſite to the participation of the Lords Supper.

They make profeſſion of the true Faith and are of good Converſation, they have knowledge of the principles of Religion, and ſo are able to examine themſelves, and if any of them ſhould not underſtand the Nature of that ordinance, they may ſoon be ſufficiently informed.

Two things are evident in the practice of the Apoſtles, one is, that they readily admitted ſuch into the Church, as made a profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, *Act.* 2. *Act.* 6. We never read that ever they denied Admiſſion to any Man or Woman that made that profeſſion; the other is, that all that were thus received by them, were admitted to the Lords Supper, 1 *Cor.* 10. 17. *Act.* 2. 24. They made no diſtinction of the Adult Members of the Church, into Communicants and Non-Communicants.

Thoſe that are commanded by God to participate of the Lords Supper, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper, but all profeſſors that have a good Converſation and Knowledge are commanded by God to participate in the Lords Supper, if Men have not theſe Qualifications

lifications they are not obliged immediately to participate in the Lords Supper, for it would be a ſin if they ſhould: But having theſe Qualifications they are bound, provided they have opportunity. Chriſt has laid this Law upon Profeſſors, 1 *Cor.* 11. 24, 25. The perſons here commanded are not only true Believers, then none can do it with a good Conſcience but thoſe that know themſelves to be true Believers; then the Church Authority can require none but true Believers to come, the Perſons therefore required to partake are ſuch profeſſors as carry it inoffenſively, and if ſuch are bound to come, the Church is bound to receive them, they may not hinder any Man from doing his Duty.

There can be no juſt cauſe aſſigned, why ſuch Men ſhould be debarred from coming to the Lords Supper, they are not to be debarred for not giving the higheſt evidence of ſincerity; There never was any ſuch Law in the Church of God, that any ſhould be debarred Church Priviledges becauſe they did not give the higheſt evidence of ſincerity, nor for want of the Exerciſe of Faith; it is unreaſonable to believe Men to be viſible Saints from their Infancy till they be forty or fifty years of Age, and yet not capable of coming to the Lords Supper, for want of the Exerciſe of Faith; they are not to be denied becauſe of the weakneſs of Grace, they that have the leaſt Grace need to have it Nouriſhed and Cheriſhed.

Such Adult Perſons as are worthy to be admitted into the Church, or being in the Church are worthy to be continued without cenſure, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper; it is utterly unreaſonable to deny the Adult Members of the Church, the Lords Supper, and yet not lay them under cenſure; If they are guilty of any ſuch offence as to be denyed the Lords Supper, why are they not cenſured? If they are not worthy to be cenſured, why are they kept from the Lords Supper?

There are ſome Scriptures that have been thought to hold forth a need of ſomewhat further, in order to participation in the Lords Supper, which if they be examined will be found to be ſtrained beyond the import of them, *Pſal.* 6 16. *David* ſaith, I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my Soul, hence it is argued, that Men ſhould give an Account of the manner of their Converſion, in order to their Admiſſion; but if it ſhould be granted that *David* doth reſpect the work of Regeneration, doth it follow becauſe he was willing to talk of it, that they might make a Law to bind him to do it in the Synagogue, or doth it follow that *David* offered to do it in order to his joyning with the *Jewiſh* Church, *Act.* 2. 37. They were

were pricked at the heart, before they were admitted into the Church, but let it be considered that many others were joyned to the Christian Church, of whom we read no such thing, and here is no living Rule that others must declare that they are pricked at the heart before their Admission; yea it is certain, that these did not declare their trouble, in order to their Admission into the Church, but in order to their Direction; yea, it doth not appear that these Men were under a work of Conversion at this time, they might be Godly Men before, the thing that stung them was a National sin, which in probability, they had no hand in; For the greater part of them, were strangers, come up to keep the Feast of *Pentecost*, and were greatly affected with the sin which the Nation of the *Jews* were guilty of in Crucifying of Christ, *Act.* 9. 26, 27. The Church at *Jerusalem* refused to admit *Paul* to their Communion, till they were informed by *Barnabas*, of his Conversion, but it doth not appear that *Paul* did then desire to participate with them in the Lords Supper, possibly it might be only in hearing of the Word and Prayer, and the reason why they were unwilling to receive him, was not any doubt whether his Conversion was sincere, but whether he was a Christian; As if in a Popish Country, one who had been a violent Persecutor should Essay to joyn himself to a Protestant Congregation, it would be no wonder if they should be affraid of him, until they were informed that he was become a Protestant; this is no foundation to require of all that joyn to the Church, an Account about the manner of their Conversion. 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. Men are required to be ready to give an Answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them; but here by the reason of the hope that is in them, we are not to understand their experiences of the Grace of God, but the grounds of their Faith, the reason why they did believe the Christian Doctrine? This is evident, because he is speaking of Persecution, *v.* 14. and because he directs them to give their Answer with meekness and fear.

Quest: *Here it may be enquired, whether such Persons as have a good Conversation and a Competent Knowledge, may come to the Lords Supper, with a good Conscience, in case they know themselves to be in a Natural Condition?*

Answ. They may and ought to come, tho they know themselves to be in a Natural Condition; this Ordinance is instituted for all the Adult Members of the Church who are not scandalous, and therefore must be attended by them; as no Man may neglect Prayer, or hearing the Word, because he cannot do it in Faith, so he may not neglect the Lords Supper.

The

The Lords Supper is Inſtituted to be a means of Regeneration, it is not appointed for the Converting of Men to the Chriſtian Religion, for only ſuch as are Converted may partake of it; but it is not only for the ſtrengthening of Saints, but a means alſo to work ſaving Regeneration.

There be many, according to the Ordinance of Chriſt, to be admitted to the Lords Supper, who are not Regenerate, *Matth.* 25. 1, 2. The Kingdom of Heaven is like ten Virgins, five of them were Wiſe, and five Fooliſh, and it can have no other immediate end reſpecting theſe, but their Converſion; the end of all Ordinances is ſalvation, and therefore to theſe Men it muſt be Regeneration, for without it, they cannot be ſaved.

This Ordinance hath a proper tendency to draw ſinners to Chriſt; in this Ordinance there is a particular Invitation to ſinners, to come to Chriſt for Pardon, here is an affecting Repreſentation of the Virtue of Chriſts ſufferings, here is a Seal whereby the Truth of the Goſpel is confirmed, all which are very proper to draw ſinners to Chriſt.

If the Lords Supper be only for the ſtrengthening of Saints, then they who are not Saints do profane the Ordinance, when they do partake, and it is not Lawful for them to partake, and then they that do not know themſelves to be Saints, don't know that it is Lawful for them to partake, and ſo far as any Man hath ſcruples about his Saintſhip, he muſt proportionably have ſcruples about the Lawfulneſs of his Participation, and ſo Sacrament Days which ſhould be Days of Comfort, will become Days of Torment.

All other Ordinances are appointed for Regeneration, Prayer, hearing the Word, Baptiſm; ſo likewiſe the cenſures are, that the Soul may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus; they are to further Mens Regeneration, in caſe they be not Converted already, and it would be ſtrange if the Lords Supper alone ſhould not be appointed for that end, whereas it hath a proper tendency thereunto, and many that come to that Ordinance by the appointment of Chriſt, ſtand in as much need of it, as thoſe that partake of other Ordinances.

A ſixth part of the Worſhip is Eccleſiaſtical cenſures, theſe were appointed in the time of the Old Teſtament, and are to continue in uſe unto the end of the World, it doth evidently appear, both from the Writings of the *Jews* and likewiſe from the Scripture, that the *Jews* did make uſe of Eccleſiaſtical cenſures, *John* 4. 34, 35. *John* 3. 22. and 12. 42. And it is evident, that theſe cenſures were according,

ing to Divine Inſtitution, from *Matth.* 18. 17, 18. Chriſt doth not here make a new Inſtitution for the Goſpel Church, for that Church was not yet in Being, but he urges them to the practiſe of an Old Inſtitution; if it be enquired where we find any ſuch Inſtitution in the Old Teſtament, I Anſwer, in that expreſſion which we often find in the Old Teſtament, that they ſhould be cut off from *Iſrael*, *Gen.* 17. 14. *Exod.* 12. 14. When one Brother is required to reprove another, and in caſe of Incorrigibleneſs to complain to the Church, that command doth not only bind the Brethren of the ſame Congregation, but alſo the Brethren of any other Congregation, for there lies the ſame Bond upon us according to opportunity, not to ſuffer ſin in others, as well as in the Members of the ſame Congregation.

There is no need of a particular Inſtitution, who ſhall have the Power of Judgment, to determine whether a Perſon be to be cenſured or not; it is a part of Rule, and where God appoints Rulers in his Church, he appoints that they ſhall judge theſe matters; therefore when Chriſt appoints a Paſtor to be a Ruler in the Church, he expreſſes it by having Power of binding and looſing, *Matth.* 16. 19.

A Perſon that is under Church cenſures, is not thereby cut off from his Membership, he ſtands in a Brotherly relation to other Members of the Church, 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 15. Lying under offence and under cenſure for his offence, doth not deprive him of his Viſible Sainſhip, therefore his Children are to be Baptized.

Such offences as are of a more Heinous Nature, don't call for Church cenſures, provided there be a ſuteable Spirit of Repentance; if the end of cenſures be obtained, there is no occaſion for them; Perſons under the ſentence of Excommunication, are not only to be debarred from the Lords Supper, but alſo to be excluded from the familiar Society of the People of God; where there is no ſpecial Bond, we are not to have that Society with them, that we may have with Heathens, 1 *Cor.* 5. 9, 12.

To this Act of Worſhip appertains Abſolution, when the Perſon that hath offended doth manifeſt a Spirit of Repentance, whether he has been cenſured or not, he is to be acquited.

The ſeventh Act of Worſhip is the Bleſſing of the Congregation; there is a Bleſſing of Men by way of ſupplication, that may be performed by any Perſon, and there is a Bleſſing by way of Confirmation, this is pronounced in the Name of God; this is either extraordinary, by way of prediction, ſo the Patriarchs did bleſs

 them

their Children, and others endued with a Prophetical Spirit, did bless the People, as *Moses*; or else ordinary, pronounced in Gods Name by ordinary Ministers; this may either be pronounced by way of assertion, as when the Minister doth say, *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and do it*; Or in way of supplication, as when he saith, *The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you*; Yet this is more then a Prayer, *Viz.* A Declaration in Gods Name what shall come to pass, and therefore it must be understood in such a way as is according to Gods Covenant, *Deut.* 20. 34. *God appointed the Priests of Old to Bless the People*, Numb. 6. 23. And this work seems to be a common work to the rest of the Levites, who were teachers in *Israel*, *Deut.* 10. 8. There is no need of any new Institution in the Gospel, impowring Ministers to bless in the Name of God, it being a proper part of the work of a Minister; Christ by appointing Ministers, hath appointed Men to bless the People; yet that seems to be Instituted, *Matth.* 10. 12, 13. *Deut.* 21. 5.

Such Men as are Preachers of the Gospel, yet not separated to that work by Ordination, have no Power to bless the Congregation, because this depends meerly upon Institution, therefore is not to be done, but according to Institution.

Ministers being appointed to bless Authoritatively in the Name of God, it is utterly improper for them to speak in the first Person, including themselves, *Numb.* 6. 24. It is also improper for them to Bless the Church of God, that are dispersed all over the World.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Churches consisting of Divers Congregations.

A Church consisting of Divers Congregations, is a Society of Divers Congregational Churches, joyning together according to Gods appointment, for the constant carrying on of the Publick Worship of God; such Churches are acknowledged in the greatest Part of Protestant Churches; but some in latter times do make a Question whether there be any such Churches.

That there are National Churches, does appear, *First*, from the light of Nature, the light of Nature teaches us, that Man was made for the Worship of God, that Man is fitted for Society, and the great end why he is so, is, that in Society he may carry on the Worship of God, and as the light of Nature teaches us, that lesser Societies ought to carry on the Worship of God in Conjunction, so that Kingdoms and Countrys should joyn together in promoting and advancing the Worship of God; it is most agreeable to the light of Nature, that they that are one People, should Unite together in carrying on Gods Worship, and should have Power to regulate and govern the several parts of that Body. Nature teaches, that every Kingdom should see that the Worship and Ordinances of God, be attended in the several Congregations therein.

2dly, From Gods appointing the Nation of the *Jews* to be one Church, *Act.* 7. 38. And God has not appointed any new forms of Churches in the times of the New Testament; there are no other kinds of Churches appointed now; Congregational Churches are no new kind of Churches, but according to the Old Institution; for every Synagogue of the *Jews* was a Congregational Church, they had Ecclesiastical Rule and Government in them; they are called Churches by Christ, *Matth.* 18. 17. That the Old Testament Institution doth continue still, appears partly because the Christian Churches of the *Jews* were subordinate to the National Church of the *Jews*; they were Members of the National Church, and did attend *Jewish* Ordinances; and therefore by Institution, Christian

Congre-

Congregations are not absolute, but Subordinate to a National Church; it is further evident, because the *Jewish* National Church did not cease as their Ceremonies did, because their Date was out, but because they rejected Christ, *Rom.* 11. 20. Had they kept Gods Covenant, they would have continued a National Church to this Day.

3*ly*, From the Publick Covenant that is between God and a professing People; God made a Publick Covenant between him and the People of *Israel*, wherein he engages publick Prosperity unto them, upon condition of their obedience: and all professing Countries are under the same Covenant for substance; the promises, and so the threatnings declared are of force unto the end of the World, and we have the like encouragement to obedience that they had, and are in the like danger in case of disobedience.

God deals with professing Countrys at this Day according to the Tenor of that Covenant, those promises will never be out of Date to the end of the World. God makes the same to *Israel* with respect to the time of their Restoration, this abundantly Witnesseth that every Christian Nation is a Church; if God hath made a Covenant with them upon condition of obedience, then they are a Society in Covenant with God, then they are one body in Covenant with God, and the whole hath Power over the parts, and they are invested with sufficient Authority to see the Covenant kept: If they were in Covenant, and had not Power to make the several parts to keep Covenant, the Covenant would be a snare to them; particular Societies might bring guilt upon them, and they would have no Power to remove it; if they be all engaged in one individual Covenant, the Country hath Power to regulate all Maleadministrations that any of the parts are guilty of. If they are in one individual Covenant, they are as one body Exponed by God, the People of God, the flock of Christ, and therefore one Church; here is all that made *Israel* to be a Church, therefore such a People are a Church.

4*ly*, From the promises that God hath made of making Gentile Nations to be his People; God did not only promise to set up some Churches among the Gentiles, but to take whole Nations into Covenant with himself, *Isa.* 24. 22. And it is expresly foretold by Christ, that whole Nations should receive the Gospel, and become Churches, *Matth.* 21. 43. Yea, the Scripture declareth that when *Israel* is Converted, they shall be in the same Covenant as formerly, the same promises are made to them in *Ezekiel*, as the Fruits of their obedience, as were made to them in *Deutronomy*; and if the whole *Jewish* Nation

Nation will be one Church, when they are reſtored, then it will be ſo with every other Chriſtian Nation, the difference between *Jews* and *Gentiles* is now aboliſhed.

5. Becauſe the ſupream Eccleſiaſtical Authority doth not lye in particular Congregations; if there be no National Church, then every particular Congregation is abſolute and independant, and not reſponſable to any higher Power: This is too Lordly a principle, it is too ambitious a thing for every ſmall Congregation to arrogate ſuch an uncontroulable Power, and to be accountable to none on Earth; this is neither a probable way for the Peace of Churches, nor for the ſafety of Church Members; appeals are admitted in all Kingdoms; and it is more probable that in a whole Country, Perſons may be found that may rectify the Miſcarriages of particular Congregations, then that particular Congregations will not miſcarry; this abſoluteneſs of particular Congregations is a dignity that the primitive Churches did not enjoy, this is not the common Priviledge of Goſpel Churches; the primitive Churches were under the Government of the Apoſtles, and it ſeems that God gave them this Power, becauſe the ordinary way of Government could not then be practiſed, the greater part of all Gentile Nations lying in their Heatheniſm.

Obj. 1. *We don't find in the New Teſtament, any National Church among the Gentiles.*

Anſw. The reaſon of that is, not that National Churches are not according to the mind of God, in the Days of the New Teſtament, but becauſe there was no Nation that did receive the Chriſtian faith. Tho there were many Congregations gathered among the Gentiles, yet there were very few of them, comparitively, that did entertain the Goſpel; the bulk of all the Gentile Nations, lay in their Heatheniſm, during all that time that we have the Hiſtory of in the Scriptures.

Obj. 2. *God hath not appointed in the New Teſtament any National Officers, as the High Prieſt in* Iſrael, *nor any National place of Worſhip as* Jeruſalem, *therefore there is no National Church.*

Anſw. 1. To have one National Officer over the whole, is not eſſential to the being of a National Church; *Iſrael* was a National Church, when they had no ſuch National Officers, while the firſt Born did Exerciſe the Office of the Prieſts, before the ſeparation of the Levites to that work. There be ſeveral ſorts of civil Government, none of which are eſſential to a Republick. The being of a National Church doth not neceſſitate this or that form of Govern-

ment: If there be a National Church, it follows that there must be some to Rule over the whole, but that this Power should reside either solely, or principally in one Man, doth not follow at all. It was suteable to the State of the *Jewish* Church, that there should be one supream Officer to be a Type of Christ; but now there being no such occasion, the Church may be governed without any such.

2. To have one National place of Worship, is but accidental to a National Church; *Israel* was a National Church in *Egypt*, yet had no National place of Worship; all the Worship of God, besides that which was tipical, might be attended in their Synagogues. The not having a National place of Worship, is no hinderance to their being Governed by a National Authority. There may be a National Government as well without, as with a National place of Worship.

This National Church is to be divided into provincial, and those again subdivided into Classical. The Light of Nature teaches us to make such Divisions of great Political Bodies, that Government may be more easily managed. Natural prudence teaches Men in the civil State, to make such Subordination of Courts of Justice, for the benefit of the Common Wealth. This is according to the Counsel which was given to *Moses*, by his father in Law, and approved by God, *Exod.* 18. By the same Rule that the whole is to Rule over the parts, the greater parts are to Rule over the lesser parts, for a greater part, is an whole respecting the lesser parts into which it is divided. A County is a part with respect to a Province, but an whole with respect to the several Congregations therein, and accordingly may Exercise Government over them; yet with Subordination to that Authority that is over the whole. A gradation both in Civil and Ecclesiastical Authority is founded in the very Law of Nature.

Obj. *If we grant a National Church under the Gospel, we may as well grant an Oecumenical Church: those that plead for the Jurisdiction of Synods, refer things at last to the Judgment of an Oecumenical Synod.*

Answ. There is no such thing as an instituted Oecumenical Church; here is a Catholick Church, but that Notes all those that profess the true Religion; but there is no Instituted Oecumenical Church, for the several Christian Nations are not in the same Covenant; they are indeed in the same special Covenant, but not in the same individual Covenant; so it is here, one Nation may keep Covenant, while other Nations break Covenant.

Neither

Neither is there any Inſtitution for Occaſional ... could convene; they have no Authority; their conſultations might be of ſome uſe to others, but they have no Authority. A National Synod, is the higheſt Eccleſiaſtical Authority upon Earth.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Government of National Churches.

SUch Proteſtants as have acknowledged National Churches, have been divided about the form of Government to be practiſed among them; ſome of them are for a mixt Government, partly by Arch-Biſhops, and Biſhops, and partly by Synods, ſo the Church of *England*; Some have Governed by a Synod alone, ſo the Church of *Scotland*; and this Government ſeems moſt Conſonant to the Word of God. Synods have been generally acknowledged in all Churches, but upon differing grounds, ſome have founded them upon that Rule of prudence, *Prov.* 24. 66. *In the Multitude of Counſellers there is ſafety*, but if they be grounded upon this, they have no other work but to counſel and adviſe, and they can have no Authority; all Eccleſiaſtical Authority does depend upon an Inſtitution, their Authority muſt be derived from God. Some do found it upon that Example, *Act.* 15. But this was not properly a Synod, this was not the meeting of the Elders of many Churches, but of the Apoſtles and Elders of the Church of *Jeruſalem*, together with the Brethren: yet no doubt but the Apoſtles, who were part of that Aſſembly, had the Power of a Synod. But the Foundation of Synods is partly that Publick Covenant, which is between God and his People, partly his Inſtitution in the Old Teſtament, and partly the Rules laid down for the Churches to walk by in the New Teſtament.

1. This Publick Covenant ſhews that the whole muſt Rule the parts. The Rule and Government doth fundamentally belong unto the Church; the Church hath a right to Govern it ſelf. Thus it is Originally with all Nations as to their civil Government, ſo alſo as to Eccleſiaſtical, and therefore the Exerciſe of this Government muſt be in the hands of ſome that do legally repreſent the whole; if it be not by ſome that repreſent the whole, then the whole do not

...the representation of the whole Church. Thus it is with a Synod, they are either the Elders of the several Churches, if the Country be not too Numerous, or such as are chosen by the Elders, if the Country be large and numerous, and these are a legal representation of the Churches; the Elders of the Churches are chosen to that Office, to be Rulers of the several Churches, and in case there be need. They have Power to select out of themselves, such a Company as may conveniently meet, with whom their Power shall be entrusted. The Light of Nature teaches, that the Government must be committed to such a Number, as shall not be uncapable by reason of their Number, to assemble and discourse together, for otherwise the Government of the Church would not be a thing practicable.

Thus it is not with Bishops, they do not legally represent the Church; for they are not chosen by the Church, they are not Persons elected by the Church to Act in their behalf, but are put into their Office by civil Authority; and how can they represent the Church who do not desire any Authority from the Church; and secondly, their Office is not of Divine Institution, and how can they who are not of Divine appointment, legally represent the Church? Those whose Office is not acknowledged in the Law of God, cannot legally represent the Church of God.

2. The Church of the *Jews* was Governed by a Counsel of seventy two Persons. Some are of Opinion that the *Jews* had both an Ecclesiastical and a civil *Sanedrim*, this is evident, that in Christs time they had a Councel that did consist in a great part of the Priests, *Act.* 14. 6. and 22. 30. And that God appointed the Priests and other Judges to joyn together in hearing of Controversies, *Deut.* 19. 17. So also that there was an assembly of the chief of the Priests and Levites, appointed by *Jehoshaphat* to hear Ecclesiastical causes, 2 *Chron.* 19. 8. And that the High Priest was over them in those Ecclesiastical causes, *v.* 11. By these things it is evident, that the Church of *Israel* was Governed by an Assembly of the Principal Men of the Church. Christ Jesus doth approve of their form of Government that was in his time, *Matth.* 23. 2, 3. By Priests, Scribes, Pharisees. By this it is not only evident, that the Government of a National or Provincial Church, by an Assembly of its Principal Elders, is a proper suteable and hopeful way; but likewise that this way is to be observed in Christian Nations, seeing no other Provision is made for their Government; many of the appointments that God made for the *Jewish* Church, do continue in force still, and this among the rest, no other Provision being made

yet

yet it does not follow that our Assemblies must have any standing president, as the *Jewish* Assemblies had their High Priest, who was their president, and was a Type of Christ; neither does it follow, that we are limitted to the same Number that they were, Circumstances being a sufficient reason for a variation in such cases.

3. The appointment of Christ, that Teaching and Ruling Elders should Govern the Church, shews the Power of Synods; these are appointed by Christ to be the Rulers of the Church, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. *Heb.* 13. 17. There are no other appointed to be Rulers of the Church since the Age of the Apostles, therefore the Government of the National Church must be in their hands; none but they have any Interest in the Publick Government; there is no Warrant from the Word of God to intrust the Government in the hands of any others, and there is sufficient Warrant for them, to take upon them the Government of the National Church, and this by Virtue of their Office. If there be a Publick Covenant, every Church is bound in Conjunction with others to see the Covenant kept, and their Rulers, with whom their Power is intrusted, are bound by Virtue of their Office, to joyn with others to see their Covenant kept; so that their Acting in a Synod, is not by Virtue of any New Office. A Minister by Virtue of his Ministerial function, hath Power in Conjunction with others, to Govern the National or Provincial Church.

Obj. *If Ministers have a Bond upon them, to joyn with others in the Rule of the National or Provincial Church, then they seem in their own Persons to be bound to attend that Service; which if all should do in National Synods, the Synods would be so large a Body, that they could not Discourse together, and it would be an intollerable prejudice to their Congregations, being much deprived of their Labours.*

Answ. The Power of Intrusting delegates is Warranted by the Light and Law of Nature, there being a necessity of it for the good Government of Societies, and there is no necessity of a particular Institution in this case; the necessity of humane affairs does require that Government be intrusted with such a Number that it may be managed to advantage to the Publick, neither is there any hazard of being involved in guilt by such a method; a select Number of the most Prudent and Holy of the Elders, are as likely to Govern the

Church according to the mind of God, as the whole Body of the Elders of a Nation.

CHAP. X.

Of the Power of Synods.

THE Power of Synods doth consist principally in these things.

1. They are to teach the People, they are to hold forth Light unto the Church, that was a part of the work of the *Sanedrim* at *Jerusalem*, to teach the People the will of God, *Matth.* 23. 2, 3. That was the special work of the Levites, *Deut.* 33. 10. That Assembly mentioned, *Act.* 15. Met together to give Light to the People of God.

It is very meet that Synods do Publish confessions of faith, not only to bear Testimony to the World, and other Christian Kingdoms, of their acknowledging the Truth, but especially to be a Light unto the Churches, to guide them in the way of Life, this hath generally been practised by the Synods of the reformed Churches.

They should particularly Vindicate the Truth, and bear their Testimony against those Errors that are Springing up, *Act.* 15. 24. It is meet also in case of Corruptions in manners, that they do declare what the mind of God is, and Vindicate the Rule; that, if it be possible, they may root out such Licentious principles as are prevailing amongst the People, and advise them to repent of such degeneracies as bring down the Judgments of God. Yet no Man is bound to receive the Doctrines, or practise the Rules held forth by a Synod, because they are taught by them. A Synod is not infallible, and

therefore

therefore no Rule, or Doctrine, is to be taken up on trust from them; Men do owe that respect to a Synod, as 'tis an Ordinance of God, solemnly to weigh the Doctrine held forth thereby, but they are not to receive them by an implicite faith; we are bound to prove all things, and if a Man do practise against the Light of his own Conscience, because a Synod hath otherwise determined, he greatly sins, *Rom.* 14. 23. The Synod may direct him in a wrong way, and no Man can be bound to any thing that God has forbidden, *Deut.* 13. 3.

2. They are to bind and loose, to inflict Ecclesiastical censures, or to take them off; the Supream Ecclesiastical Authority must have Power of Judgment, that so there may no publick guilt lye upon the Church, if they have not Power of Judgment, Particular Persons may be oppressed by the rigour of Presbyteries, and many irregularities committed by the Church, whereby the Country doth become guilty, and there would be no sufficient way to deliver the Land from guilt. Synods have Power to Admonish, to Excommunicate, and deliver from these censures, and every Man must stand to the Judgment of the National Synod, *Deut.* 17. 12.

They are to Judge in case of Complaint; when any Person Judges himself wronged by the Judgment of a particular Church, and complains to a Synod, they are to hear the case, and upon the hearing of it, not to advise the Church either to confirm the sentence, or to take it off; but if there be occasion, they are to take off the sentence and restore the Man unto his priviledge.

They are to judge in case of other Complaints; if any Man hath a Complaint against another, and cannot obtain a hearing in the Church that he belongs unto, or if the Elders of a particular Church be Complained of, for any Male-Administration, or if a Church with the Elders be complained of for Heresie, or other scandalous Corruption, the Synod is to hear and Judge the case, and they may not only censure particular Persons, but whole Churches also in case of need.

3. Synods

Synods have Power to overfee the calling of Perſons to the Miniſtry, and to appoint thoſe who ſhall examine them, if the Synod have the Government of the Church in their hands, tho' they do not put ſtrange Congregations of their Liberty, yet they ſhould ſee that Churches Act regularly, and that none ſhould be ſet in the Miniſtry but ſuch as are duely qualified, therefore it belongs them to appoint meet Perſons to examine ſuch as are called to the Miniſtry, and to teſtify their approbation by the laying on of hands, Tit. 1. 5.

The appointing of Ceremonies of Worſhip is properly the work of Jeſus Chriſt; the making of Orders concerning the external concernments of the Church, is properly the work of the Civil Magiſtrate; but the appointment of ſuch as ſhall overſee the calling of Perſons to the Miniſtry, doth properly belong to the Eccleſiaſtical Authority.

FINIS.

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JAN 22 '72
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY